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The Movies

Photos & Quotes By Year

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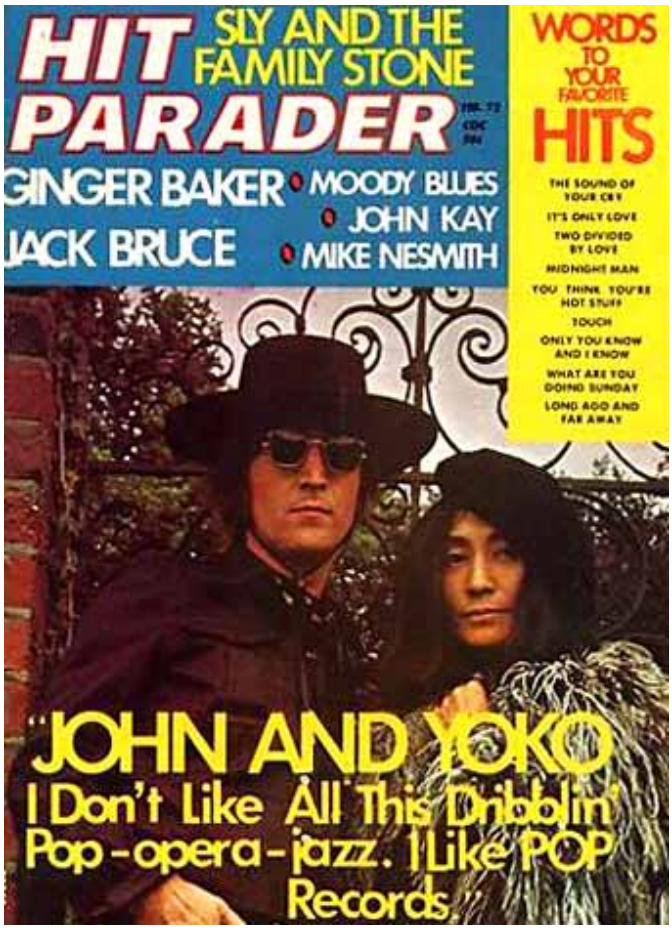
ABOUT THIS INTERVIEW:

Alan Smith from the New Musical Express caught up with John Lennon and Yoko Ono for an exclusive interview during the promotion of Lennon's new 'Imagine' LP. Topics of discussion include John and Yoko's recent film projects, the Beatles past and present, as well as Paul McCartney's latest album release entitled 'Ram'. The conversatsion was published in the New Musical Express in the UK, and was reprinted for the United States in Hit Parader magazine's February 1972 issue.

- Jay Spangler, www.beatlesinterviews.org



Q: "Isn't there room today for the Beatles as a living band? A contemporary band? You're surely now far more aware as people. Must it always now be for you that the Beatles made yesterday's music? Or is it that you're now too egocentric to be able to work together fully, even if you tried?"

JOHN: "We always were egocentric. But look, George is on half of my new album playing guitar. The only reason Ringo wasn't on it was because he was abroad, making his movie. So then the three of us would have been on, but then it wouldn't have been the Beatles. It would have been Plastic Ono because I would have the final say. There would be no decision making by George or Ringo, other than if I liked an idea I'd take it -- which is what happened with the Beatles -- but then it was more diplomatic."

"So yes, it's quite possible about the Beatles working as a unit, because I might play on George's or Ringo's if they wanted my style of playing. But imagine how we've flowered since then. George is suddenly the biggest seller of all of us. I think my music's improved a millionfold lyric-wise and everything. And Ringo's coming out and writing 'It Don't Come Easy' and now he's going to write the title song for this cowboy thing he's in, and he's playing a really tough guy and all that. It's really beautiful."

"The fact is, the Beatles have left school... and we have to get a job. That's made us work -- really work harder. I think we're much better than we ever were when we were together. Look at us today. I'd sooner have 'Ram,' John Lennon Plastic Ono Band, George's album, and Ringo's single and the movies than 'Let It Be' or 'Abbey Road.'"

YOKO: "If the four of them had gone on, then they would have suffocated each other."

Q: "Do you resent journalists talking about the past?"

JOHN: "No. I'm always doing it myself. It's only human. Something funny happened the other day -- I went into Apple and they said, 'Jesus, you look like a Beatle again!' And you know, just for a second I'd forgotten what a Beatle really was. It was because I'd just got back from New York and I hadn't been a Beatle at all. It's just been me and Yoko, and we've been doing all sorts of things."

Q: "Do either of you feel any pain of any kind, any problems, either physical or mental? Or are you totally cleansed of any hangups of the past?"

JOHN: "Oh no. I'm sure not. I just know myself better, that's all. I can handle myself better. That Janov thing -- the Primal Scream, and so on-- it does affect you because you recognize yourself in there. The difference between us and Janov, as Yoko puts it, is that the past we remember is the past we create now because of the necessity of the present. I wouldn't have missed it though. It was very good for me. I still 'prime' and it still works."

Q: "Tell me about your philosophy of life. Many of your comments have been construed as extreme left wing or communist."

JOHN: "They knock me for saying 'Power To The People' and say that no one section should have the power. Rubbish. The people aren't a section. The people means everyone."

"I think that everyone should own everything equally and that people should own part of the factories and they should have some say in who is the boss and who does what. Students should be able to select teachers."

"It may be like communism but I don't really know what real communism is. There is no real communism state in the world -- you must realize that Russia isn't. It's a facist state. The socialism I talk about is 'British socialism,' not where some daft Russian might do it or the Chinese might do it. That might suit them. Us, we'd rather have a nice socialism here -- a British socialism."

Q: "Don't you both spend a great deal of your time filming yourselves, and having yourselves filmed?"

JOHN: "Why not? It's home movies. And the ultimate movie is a home movie. Luc Godard, or whatever his name is, is now making 8mm films. Home movies is where it's at. Poetry's done at home -- why shouldn't movies be the same way?"

"In our film 'Apotheosis' you see us for only two seconds. In 'Fly,' Yoko's film, she's not in it. In 'Rape' there was a Hungarian girl. In 'Erection,' the one I've just made about a hotel, it was done from still photographs over a year and a half. There's only a couple with us in -- so that whole thing is a lie."

YOKO: "If we were putting ourselves in films all the time -- so what. We do not pretend."

Q: "Yoko's art seems to me to exclude appreciation of the more established works of art, the Mona Lisa, and so on."

JOHN: "Not necessarily, but her art is the very opposite of making a saint out of the Mona Lisa or having it in a building where people could be living."

YOKO: "I'm not somebody who wants to burn the Mona Lisa -- that's the difference between some revolutionaries and me -- they think you have to burn the establishment. I'm just saying, make the Mona Lisa into something like a shirt. Change the value of it. It's like those four boys who got together to make the Beatles and without kidding anybody they changed the whole world. And that's beautiful. That's all I'm trying to do -- the only thing with the Beatles is that they changed it and then they stopped there -- they weren't going on being revolutionaries."

JOHN: "I never wanted the Beatles to be has-beens, I wanted to kill it while it was on top. Remember I said ten years ago, 'I'm not going to be singing She Loves You at thirty.' Although I expressed it that, by thirty, I guess I would have woken up a bit or changed my sights."

Q: "Are you now remotely interested in singles or chart success?"

JOHN: "Sure. I get all the musical papers and the daily papers. I get my world chart thing and Billboard, and the other one... Cashbox, and I mark off all the Apple records all 'round the world. The Beatles are blasting the world up. We've got records everywhere and two or three in every chart. I get a kick out of it because I'm getting through to all those people, and because I'm doing it on my own or with Yoko."

"And I like singles, and not LPs. I like the idea of saying everything in three minutes."

Q: "Did you listen to Paul McCartney's 'Ram' album?"

JOHN: "Of course I did. The first time I heard it I thought it was awful, and then the second time, ahem, I fixed the record player a bit and it sounded better. I enjoyed a couple like 'My Dog It's Got Three Legs' or something, and the intro to 'Uncle Albert.' I can't stand the second track from the... well I mean, it doesn't matter anyway. In general I think the other album he did was better in a way. At least there were some songs on it."

"I don't like all this dribblin' pop-opera jazz. I like pop records that are pop records."

Q: "Is there a song on your album 'Imagine' that refers to Paul... lines about a pretty face and the sound of Muzak?"

JOHN: (smiling) "Er, there's a song which COULD be a statement about Paul. It could be interpreted that way. But then, it could be about an old chick I'd known."

Q: What do you think of your own album?"

JOHN: "It's the best thing I've ever done. This will show them. It's not a personal thing like the last album, but I've learned alot and this is better in every way. It's lighter too -- I was feeling very happy. There's a guy called George Harrison on it and he does some mother of solos. George used to be with The Bubbles or somebody. Then there's a guy called Nicky Hopkins. Then there's Jim Gordon on drums, Alan White on drums, Jim Keltner on drums, and they're fantastic."

"Yoko's on whip, and that's very good. Whip and mirror, actually. Then we had John Barnham on a few things and King Curtis is on sax. The Flux Fiddlers are on violins."

"Eighty percent was recorded in Britain in seven days. I took them, re-mixed them, and took it to America like they used to do in the old days. It took me nine days to make this album, and ten to make the other before... so I'm getting faster."

Source: Transcribed by www.beatlesinterviews.org from original magazine issue

Return to Database Menu